

THOUGHTS
ON THE
IMPORTANCE
OF THE
MANNERS OF THE GREAT
TO
GENERAL SOCIETY.

YOU ARE THE MAKERS OF MANNERS.
SHAKESPEARE.

SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

M.DCC,LXXXVIII.

REPORT

ON THE

COMPARISON

OF THE

RESULTS

OF THE

EXPERIMENT

CONDUCTED

BY

THE

r

THOUGHTS

ON THE

MANNERS OF THE GREAT.

TO a large and honourable class
of the community, to persons
considerable in reputation, important
by their condition in life, and com-
mendable for the decency of their
general conduct, these slight hints
are respectfully addressed. They
are not intended as a satire upon
B vice,

vice, or a ridicule upon folly, being written neither for the foolish nor the vicious. The subject is too serious for ridicule ; and those to whom it is addressed are too respectable for satire. It is recommended to the consideration of those who, filling the higher ranks in life, are naturally regarded as patterns, by which the manners of the rest of the world are to be fashioned.

The mass of mankind, in most places, and in most conditions of life, is perhaps chiefly composed of what may be termed *good kind of people ;*

people ; for persons of very flagitious wickedness are almost as rare as those of very eminent piety: to the latter of these, admonition were impertinent ; to the former it were superfluous. These remarks, therefore, are principally written with a view to those persons of rank and fortune who live within the restraints of moral obligation, and acknowledge the truth of the Christian religion: and who, if in certain instances they allow themselves in practices not compatible with a strict profession of Christianity, seem to do it rather from habit and want of re-

lection, than either from disbelief of its doctrines, or contempt of its precepts.

Inconsideration, Fashion, and the World, are three confederates against Virtue, with whom even good kind of people often contrive to live on excellent terms: and the fair reputation which may be obtained by a complaisant conformity to the prevailing practice, and by mere decorum of manners, without a strict attention to religious principle, is a constant source of danger to the rich and great. There is something almost

most irresistibly seducing in the contagion of general example: hence the necessity of that vigilance, which it is the business of Christianity to quicken by incessant admonition, and of the world, to lay asleep by the perpetual opiates of ease and pleasure.

A fair reputation is one of the most laudable objects of human ambition; yet even this really valuable blessing is sometimes converted into a snare, by inducing a treacherous security as soon as it is obtained. A fatal indolence is apt to creep in

upon the soul when it has once acquired the good opinion of mankind, if the acquisition of that good opinion was the ultimate end of its endeavours. Pursuit is at an end when the object is in possession ; for he is not likely to “ press forward ” who thinks he has already “ attained.” The love of worldly reputation, and the desire of God’s favour, have this specific difference, that in the latter, the possession always augments the desire ; and the spiritual mind accounts nothing done while any thing remains undone.

But

But after all, a fair fame, and the support of numbers, is obviously a deceitful dependence; for as every individual must die for himself, and answer for himself, both these imaginary resources will fail, just at the moment when they could have been of any use. A good reputation, even without internal piety, would be worth obtaining, if the tribunal of heaven were fashioned after the manner of human courts of judicature. If at the general judgment we were to be tried by a jury of our fellow mortals, it would be but common prudence to secure

their favour at any price. But it can now stand us in little stead in the great day of decision, as it is the consummation of infinite goodness, not to abandon us to the mercy of each other's sentence; but to reserve us for *his* final judgment who knows every motive of every action; who will make strict inquisition into sincerity of heart, and uprightness of intention; in whose eyes an ineffectual prayer, or a powerless wish, will outweigh the most splendid profession, or the most dazzling action.

We cannot but rejoice in every
degree

degree of human virtue which operates favourably on society, whatever be the motive, or whoever be the actor ; and we should gladly commend every degree of goodness, though it be not squared by our own rules and notions. Even the good actions of such persons as are too much actuated by a regard to appearances, are not without their beneficial effects. The righteousness of those who occupy this middle region of morality certainly exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ; for they are not only exact in ceremonies, but in many respects

respects fulfil the weightier matters of law and conscience. Like Herod, they often "hear gladly, and do many things." Yet I am afraid I shall be thought severe in remarking that, in general, those characters in the New Testament, of whose future condition no very comfortable hope is given, seem to have been taken, not from the profligate, the abandoned, and the dishonourable ; but from that decent class commonly described by the term of *good sort of people* ; that mixed kind of character in which virtue appears, if it does not predominate. The young Ruler

was

5

was certainly one of the first of this order ; and yet we are left in dark uncertainty, as to his final allotment. The rich man who built him barns and storehouses, and only proposed to himself the full enjoyment of that fortune, which, perhaps, he had very fairly obtained, might have been, for all that appears to the contrary, a very good sort of man ; at least, if we may judge of him by multitudes who live precisely for the same purposes, and yet enjoy a good degree of credit, and are rather considered as objects of admiration than of censure.

But

But the most alarming instance is he, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, fared sumptuously every day, and gave nothing to Lazarus ; and who is represented after death as lifting up his eyes, being in torments. He committed no enormities that have been transmitted to us ; for that he dined well, dressed well, and refused to relieve one beggar, could hardly incur the bitter penalty of eternal misery. His punishment seems to have been the consequence of a hard, worldly, selfish heart, spoilt by the softnesses and delights of life. There is no
error

error more common, or more dangerous, than that an unrestrained indulgence of appetite is generally attended with a liberal, humane, and merciful temper. Nor is there any opinion more false and more fatal, or which demands to be more steadily controverted, than that libertinism and goodnature are natural and necessary associates. For after all that corrupt poets, and more corrupt philosophers, have told us of the blandishments of pleasure, and of its tendency to soften the temper, and humanize the affections, it is certain, that nothing hardens the heart

heart like excessive and unbounded luxury : and he who refuses the fewest gratifications to his own voluptuousness, will generally be found the least susceptible of tenderness for the wants of others. The cruelties at Rome bore an exact proportion to the dissoluteness at Capreæ. And it is not less notorious, that the Imperial fidler became more barbarous, as he grew more profligate. Prosperity, says the Arabian proverb, fills the heart till it makes it hard ; and the most dangerous pits and snares for human virtue are those, which are so covered over

with the flowers of prosperous fortune, that it requires a cautious foot, and a vigilant eye, to escape them.

Even Ananias and Saphira were, I doubt not, well esteemed in society ; for it was enough to establish a very considerable reputation to sell even part of their possessions for religious purposes : but what an alarm does it sound to hypocrisy, that instead of being rewarded for what they brought, they were punished for what they kept back ! And it is to be feared, that this deceitful pair are not the only one, upon

upon whom a good action, without a pure intention, has drawn down a righteous retribution.

For though outward actions are the surest, and to human eyes, the only evidences of sincerity, yet Christianity is a religion of *motives* and *principles*. The Gospel is continually referring to the *heart*, as the source of good ; it is to the poor in *spirit*, to the pure in *heart*, that the divine blessing is annexed. A man may correct many improper practices, and refrain from many immoral actions, from merely human motives ;

motives ; but, though this partial amendment is not without its uses, yet this is only attacking symptoms, and neglecting the mortal disease. But to subdue a worldly temper, to control irregular desires, and to have a clean heart, is to extinguish the foul, and spirit, and essence of sin. Totally to *accomplish* this, is, perhaps, beyond the narrow limits of human perfection ; but to *attempt* it (with an humble reliance on superior aid), is so far from being an extravagant or romantic flight of virtue, that it is but the common duty of every ordinary Christian. And this

C

per-

perfection is not the less real, because it is a point which seems constantly to recede from our approaches. Our highest attainments, instead of bringing us "to the mark," only teach us to remove the mark to a greater distance, by giving us more humbling views of ourselves, and more exalted conceptions of the state which we are labouring after. Though the progress towards perfection may be perpetual in this world, the actual attainment is reserved for a better. And this restless desire of a happiness which we cannot reach, and this lively idea of a perfection which

which we cannot attain, are among the many arguments for a future state, which seem to come little short of absolute demonstration.

But I must remember, that this is not a sermon, but a mere superficial essay. I am neither an old man, a clergyman, nor a methodist, so that it is at least *possible* that I may be neither actuated by moroseness, self-interest, nor enthusiasm. I live much in the world, and have as much satisfaction in its lawful pleasures, and permitted indulgencies, as other men. I endeavour to cul-

tivate the greatest candour for the opinions, and affection for the persons of all my fellow creatures. I am charmed with the humanity, generosity, and integrity, even of worldly men. But one virtue must not intrench upon other. Charity must not supplant faith. If a man be generous, good natured, and humane, it is impossible not to feel for him the tenderness of a brother ; but if, at the same time, he be irreligious, intemperate, or profane, who shall dare to say he is in a safe state ? Good humour, and generous sentiments, will always make a man
a plea-

a pleasant acquaintance; but who shall lower the doctrines of the Gospel, to accommodate them to the conduct of men? Who shall bend a strait rule, to favour a crooked practice? Who shall controvert that authority which has said, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord?*

May I venture to be a little paradoxical; and while so many grave persons are descanting on the mischiefs of vice, may I be permitted to say a word on the mischiefs of virtue; or, rather, of that shining counterfeit, which, while it wants

the specific gravity, has much of the brightness of sterling worth? Never, perhaps, did any age produce more beautiful declamations in praise of virtue than the present; never were more polished periods rounded in honour of humanity. An ancient Pagan would imagine that Aftrea had returned to take up her abode in our metropolis; a primitive Christian would conclude, that "righteousness and peace had there met together." But how would they be surprised to find that the obligation to these duties was not always thought binding on their eloquent encomiasts!

encomiaſts ! that univerſal benevolence may ſubſiſt with partial injuſtice, and boundleſs liberality with fordid ſelfiſhneſs ! that one may ſeem eager in redreſſing the injuries of half the globe, without deſcending to the petty detail of private virtues ; and burn with zeal for the good of millions one never ſaw, and yet ſpread vice and ruin through the little circle of one's own perſonal influence !

When the general texture of an irregular life is ſpangled over with ſome conſtitutional pleaſing

C 4 qualities ;

qualities; when gaiety, good humour, and a thoughtless profusion of expence throw a lustre round the faultiest characters, it is no wonder that common observers are blinded into admiration: a profuse generosity dazzles them more than all the duties of the decalogue. But though it may be a very useful quality towards securing the election of a borough, it will contribute but little towards making sure the calling and election to the kingdom of heaven. It is somewhat strange that extravagance should be the great criterion of goodness with those
very

very people who are themselves the victims to this idol ; for the prodigal pays no debts if he can help it : and it is notorious, that in one of the wittiest and most popular comedies which this country has ever produced, those very passages which exalt liberality at the expence of justice, were nightly applauded with enthusiastic rapture by those deluded tradesmen, whom, perhaps, that very sentiment helped to keep out of their money.

But there is another sort of fashionable character, whose false brightness

ness is still more pernicious, by casting a splendour over the most destructive vices. Corrupt manners, ruinous extravagance, and the most fatal passion for play, are sometimes gilded over with many engaging acts of charity, and a general attention and respect to the ceremonies of Christianity. But this is degrading the venerable image and superscription of religion, by stamping them on baser metal than they were ever intended to impress. The young and gay shelter themselves under such examples, and scruple the less to adopt the bad parts of such mixed charac-

characters, when they see that an immoral conduct is so compatible with a religious profession.

But I digress from my intention ; for it is not the purpose of this address to take notice of any actions which the common consent of mankind has determined to be wrong ; but of such, chiefly, as are practised by the sober, the decent, and the regular ; and to drop a few hints on such less obvious offences as are, in general,

Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne.

Nor will the bounds which I have
pre-

prescribed myself allow of my wandering into a wide and general field of observation.

The idea of the present slight performance was suggested by reading the King's late excellent proclamation against irreligion and immorality. Under the shelter of so high a sanction it may not be unseasonable to press on the hearts of the better disposed, such observances as seem to be generally overlooked; and to remark such offences as commonly elude censure, because they are not commonly thought censurable.

It

It is obvious to all serious persons, that that branch of the divine law, against which the better kind of people trespass with the least scruple, is the fourth commandment. Many who would shudder at the violation of the other nine, seem without ceremony to expunge this from the divine code; but by what authority they do this, has never been explained. The Christian legislator does not seem to have abridged the commandments; and there is no subsequent authority so much as pretended to by Protestants.

It

It is not here intended to take notice of such flagrant offences as lie open to the cognizance of higher tribunals ; or to pollute this paper with descanting on the holders of card assemblies on Sundays, the frequenters of taverns and gaming houses ; the printers of Sunday newspapers ; the proprietors of Sunday stage coaches ; and others, who openly insult the laws of the land ; laws which will always be held sacred by good citizens, even were not the law of God antecedent to them.

Many of the order whom I here
address

address are persons of the tenderest humanity, and not only wish well to the interests of virtue, but are favourably disposed to advance the cause of religion; nay, would be extremely startled at not being thought sincerely religious : yet from inconsideration, want of time, want of self-examination, want of suspecting the deceitfulness of the human heart, sometimes allow themselves in inattentions and negligences which materially affect their own safety, and the comfort of others.—While an animated spirit of charity seems to be kindled among us;

while there is a general disposition to instruct the ignorant, and to reform the vicious; one cannot help regretting that these amiable exertions should be counteracted, in some degree, by practices of a directly opposite tendency; trifling in their appearance, but serious in their effects.

There are still among us petty domestic evils, which seem too inconsiderable to claim redress. There is an aggrieved body of men in our very capital, whose spiritual hardships seem scarcely to have been
taken

taken into consideration, mean the
HAIR DRESSERS, on whom

The Sunday shines, no day of rest to them.

Is there not a peculiar degree of unkindness in exercising such cruelty on the souls of men, whose whole lives are employed in embellishing our persons? And is it quite conceivable how a lady's conscience is able to make such nice distinctions, that she would be shocked at the idea of sending for her mantua-maker, or milliner, her carpenter, or mason, on a Sunday, while she makes no scruple regularly to employ a hair-dresser?

D

It

Is it not almost ridiculous to observe the zeal we have for doing good at a distance, while we neglect the little, obvious, every-day, domestic duties, which should seem to solicit our immediate attention? But an action ever so right and meritorious, which is only to be periodically performed, at distant intervals, is less burthen some to corrupt nature, than an undeviating attention to such small, constant, right habits as are hostile to our natural indolence, and would be perpetually vexing and disturbing our self-love. The weak heart indulges

dulges its infirmity, by allowing itself intermediate omissions, and habitual neglects of duty ; reposing itself for safety, on regular, but remote returns of stated performances. It is less trouble to subscribe to the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, than to have daily prayers in our own families : and I am persuaded that there are multitudes of well-meaning people who would gladly contribute to a mission of Christianity to Japan or Otaheite, to whom it never occurred, that the hair-dresser, whom they are every Sunday detaining from church, has

a soul to be saved ; that the law of the land co-operates with the law of God, to forbid their employing him ; and that they have no right, either legal or moral, to this portion of his time. The poor man himself, perhaps, dares not remonstrate, for fear he should be deprived of his employment for the rest of the week. If there were no other objection to a pleasurable Sunday among the great and affluent, methinks this single one might operate : would not a devout heart be unwilling to rob a fellow creature of his
time

time for devotion, or a humane one of his hour of rest ?

It is strange that there should be so little consistency in human conduct, that the same persons should gladly contribute to spread the light of Christianity in another hemisphere ; while, by their example, they actually obstruct the progress of it at home. But it is, I doubt not, much oftener owing to the imperceptible influence of custom and habit, than to a decided ill intention. Besides, it may be in morals as it is in optics, the eye and the

object may come too close to each other, to answer the end of vision. There are certain faults which press too near our self-love to be even perceptible to us.

There is an evil newly crept into polished society, and it comes under a mask so specious, that they are chiefly good sort of people who are allured by it; I mean SUNDAY CONCERTS. Many, who would be startled at a prophane, or even an idle amusement, think that the name of *sacred music* sanctifies the diversion. But if those who live in ease

3

and

and affluence do not make these petty renunciations of their own ways, and their own pleasure, what criterion have we by which to judge of their sincerity? For as the goodness of Providence has exempted them from painful occupations, they have neither labour from which to rest, nor business from which to refrain. A little abstinence from pleasure is the only evidence of their obedience to the divine precept.

I know with what indignant scorn this remark will, by many, be re-

ceived : that much will be advanced in favour of the sanctity of this amusement. I shall be told that the words are, many of them, extracted from the Bible, and that the composition is the divine Handel's. But were the angel Gabriel the poet, the archangel Michael the composer, and the song of the Lamb the subject, it would not abrogate that statute of the Most High, which has said, "Thou shalt keep holy the
" Sabbath-day, and thy SERVANT,
" and thy CATTLE, shall do no man-
" ner of work."—I am persuaded that the hallelujahs of Heaven would
make

make no moral music to the ear of a conscientious person, while he reflected that multitudes of servants are waiting in the streets, exposed to every temptation; engaged, perhaps, in prophane swearing, and idle, if not dissolute conversation: and the very cattle are deprived of that rest which the tender mercy of God was graciously pleased, by an astonishing condescension, to include in the commandment.

But I will, for the sake of argument, so far concede as to allow of the innocence, and even piety of
Sunday

5

Sunday concerts: I will suppose (what, however, does not always happen) that no unhallowed strains are ever introduced; that some attend these concerts with a view to cultivate devout affections; that they cherish the serious impressions excited by the music, and retire in such a frame of spirit as convinces them that the heart was touched while the ear was gratified: Nay, I *would* grant, if such a concession would be accepted, that the intervals were filled up with conversation, “where-
“ by one may edify another:”—Yet all these good effects, allowing them
really

really to have been produced, will not remove the invincible objection of an EVIL EXAMPLE; and what liberal spirit would refuse any reasonable sacrifice of its own pleasure to so important a motive? Your servants have been accustomed to consider a concert as a secular diversion; if you, therefore, continue it on a Sunday, will not they also expect to be indulged on that day with their common amusements? Saint Paul, who was a very liberal thinker, believed it prudent to make frequent sacrifices of things indifferent in themselves. He was willing to de-
ny

ny himself a harmless and lawful gratification, *even as long as the world stood*, rather than shock the tender consciences of men of less understanding. Where a practice is neither good nor evil, in itself, it is both discreet and generous to avoid it, if it can be attended with any possible danger to minds less enlightened, and to faith less confirmed.

But religion apart, I have sometimes wondered that people do not yield to the temptation that is held out to them, of abstaining from diversions one day in seven, upon
motives

motives of mere human policy ; as voluptuaries sometimes fast, to give a keener relish to the delights of the next repast. For pleasure, like an over-fed lamp, is extinguished by the excess of its own aliment. But the lovers of pleasure are not always prudent, even upon their own principles : for I am persuaded that the world would afford much more real satisfaction than it does, if we did not press, and torture, and strain it, to yield what it does not contain. Much good, and much pleasure, it does liberally bestow ; but no labour, or art, can extract from it that
elixir

elixir of peace, that divine essence of content, which it is not in its nature to produce. There is good sense in searching into every blessing for its *bidden* properties ; but it is folly to ransack and plunder it for such as the experience of all ages tells us are *foreign* to it. We exhaust the world of its pleasures, and then lament that it is empty ; we wring those pleasures to the very dregs, and then complain that they are vapid.

I shall, probably, be accused of a very narrow and fanatical spirit, in
animad-

animadverting on a practice so little suspected of harm as the frequenting of public walks and gardens on a Sunday: and certainly, there cannot be an amusement more entirely harmless in itself. But I must appeal to the honest testimony of our own hearts, if the *effect* be favourable to seriousness. Do we commonly retire from these places with the impressions which were made on us at church in their full force? We entered these sprightly scenes, perhaps, with a strong remaining tincture of that devout spirit which the public worship had infused into
the

If the heart be laid open to the incursion of vain imaginations, and worldly thoughts, it matters little by what gate the enemy entered. If the effect be injurious, the cause cannot be quite harmless. It is the perfidious property of certain pleasures, that, though they seem not to have the smallest harm in themselves, they imperceptibly indispose the mind to every thing that is good.

Many readers will be apt to produce against all this preciseness, that
hack-

hackneyed remark which one is tired of hearing, that Sunday diversions are allowed publicly in many foreign countries, as well in those professing the reformed religion, as popery. But the corruptions of one part of the Protestant world are no reasonable justification of the evil practices of another. Error and infirmity can never be proper objects of imitation. It is still a remnant of the old leaven : and as to pleading the practice of Roman Catholic countries, one blushes to hear an enlightened Protestant justifying himself by exam-

ples drawn from that benighted religion.

Besides, though I am far from vindicating the amusements permitted on Sundays in foreign countries, by allowing that established custom, and long prescription, have the privilege of conferring right; yet foreigners may, at least, plead the sanction of custom, and the connivance of the law. While in this country, the law of the land, and established usage, concurring with still higher motives, give a sort of venerable sanction to religious observances,

servances, the breach of which will be always more liable to misconstruction than in countries where so many motives do not concur.

I am not an advocate for the severity of a Jewish, or the moroseness of a Puritanical sabbath. I am likewise far from inferring that all those who neglect a strict observation of Sunday, are remiss in the performance of their other duties : but I will venture to affirm, that all whom I have remarked conscientiously to observe this day from right motives, have been uniformly atten-

tive to their general conduct. It has been the opinion of many wise and good men,* that Christianity will

*The testimony of one lawyer will, perhaps, be less suspected than that of many priests. —“I have ever found,” says the great Lord Chief Justice Hale, “by a strict and diligent
“observation, that a due observance of the
“duty of Sunday has ever had joined to it
“a blessing upon the rest of my time; and
“the week that has been so begun has been
“blessed and prosperous to me: and, on the
“other side, when I have been negligent of
“the duties of this day, the rest of the
“week has been unsuccessful and unhappy
“to my own secular employments. So that
“I could

will stand, or fall, as this day is neglected, or observed. Sunday seems to be a kind of Christian Palladium; and the city of God will never be totally taken by the enemy till the observance of that be quite lost. Every sincere soldier of the great Captain of our Salvation must, therefore, exert himself in its defence, as ever he would preserve

“I could easily make an estimate of my successes the week following, by the manner of my passing this day. AND I DO NOT WRITE THIS LIGHTLY, BUT BY LONG AND SOUND EXPERIENCE.”

Sir Matthew Hale's Works.

the divine Fort of Revelation against the confederated attacks of the world and the Devil.

I shall proceed to enumerate a few of the many causes which seem to impede well-disposed people in the progress of religion. None perhaps contributes more to it than that cold, prudential caution against the folly of aiming at *perfection*, so frequent in the mouths of the worldly wise. "We must take the world," say they, "as we find it; reformation is not the business of individuals, and we are commanded

“not to be righteous overmuch.”

But these admonitions are contrary to every maxim in human affairs. In arts and letters * the most consummate models are held out to imitation. We never hear any body cautioned against becoming too wise, too learned, or too rich. Zeal, in

* When Pliny the younger was accused of despising the degenerate eloquence of his own age, and of the vanity of aspiring at perfection in oratory, and of endeavouring to become the rival of Cicero; instead of denying the charge, he exclaimed with a noble spirit, *STULTISSIMUM credo, ad imitandum non OPTIMA quæque proponere.*

business,

business, is accounted commendable ; in friendship it is amiable ; in all the perishing concerns of earthly things it is extolled as exhibiting marks of a sprightly temper, and a vigorous mind. Strange ! that to be “ fervent in spirit,” should only be dishonourable in that single instance which should seem to demand unremitting diligence, and unextinguished warmth.

But after all, is an excessive and intemperate zeal the *common* vice of the times ? Is there any *very* imminent danger that the enthusiasm of the great should transport them to dangerous
and

and inconvenient excesses? Are our young men of fashion so *very* much led away by the ardour of piety, that they require to have their imaginations cooled by the freezing maxims of worldly wisdom? Is the spirit of the age so *very* much inclined to catch and to communicate the fire of devotion, as to require to be damped by admonition, or extinguished by ridicule? When the inimitable Cervantes attacked the wild notions and romantic ideas which misled the age in which he lived, he did wisely, because he combated an actually existing evil ;

but in this latter end of the eighteenth century, there seems to be little more occasion (among persons of rank, I mean) of cautions against enthusiasm than against chivalry; and he who declaims against religious excesses in the company of well bred people, shews himself to be as little acquainted with the manners of the times, as he would do who should think it a point of duty to write another Don Quixote.

Among the devices dangerous to our moral safety, certain favourite and specious maxims are not the least

least successful, as they carry with them an imposing air of indulgent candour, and always seem to be on the popular side of good nature. One of the most obvious of these is, that method of reconciling the conscience to practices not decidedly wicked, and yet not scrupulously right, by the qualifying phrase, *that there is no harm in it*. I am mistaken, if more innocent persons do not inflame their spiritual reckoning by this treacherous apology than by almost any other means. Few are systematically, or premeditatedly wicked; or propose to themselves,

at

at first, more than such small indulgences as they are persuaded *have no harm in them*. But this latitude is gradually and imperceptibly enlarged. As the expression is vague and indeterminate; as the darkest shade of virtue, and the lightest shade of vice, melt into no very incongruous colouring; as the bounds between good and evil are not always so precisely defined, but that he who ventures to the confines of the one, will find himself on the borders of the other; every one furnishes his own definition; every one extends the supposed limits a little

little farther ; till the bounds which fence in permitted from unlawful pleasures are gradually broken down, and the marks which separated them imperceptibly destroyed.

It is, perhaps, one of the most alarming symptoms of the degeneracy of morals in the present day, that the distinctions of right and wrong are almost swept away in polite conversation. The most serious offences are often named with cool indifference ; the most shameful profligacy with affected
ten-

tenderness. The substitution of the word *gallantry* for that crime which stabs domestic happiness and conjugal virtue, is one of the most dangerous of all the modern abuses of language. Atrocious deeds should never be called by gentle names. This must certainly contribute, more than any thing, to diminish the horror of vice in the rising generation. That our passions should be too often engaged on the side of error, we may look for the cause, though not for the vindication, in the unresisted propensities of our constitution: but that our *reason* should

should ever be employed in its favour, that our *conversation* should ever be taught to palliate it, that our *judgment* should ever look on it with indifference, has no shadow of excuse : because this can pretend to no foundation in nature, no apology in temptation, no palliative in passion.

However defective, therefore, our practice may be ; however we may be allured by seduction, or precipitated by passion, let us beware of lowering the STANDARD OF RIGHT. This induces an imperceptible corruption

ruption into the heart, stagnates the noblest principle of action, irrecoverably debases the sense of moral and religious obligation, and prevents us from living up to the height of our nature. It cuts off all communication with virtue, and almost prevents the possibility of a return to it. If we do not rise as high as we aim, we shall rise the higher for having aimed at a lofty mark : but where the RULE is low, the practice cannot be high, though the converse of the proposition is not proportionably true.

Nothing

Nothing more benumbs the exertions of ardent youthful virtue, than the cruel sneer which worldly prudence bestows on active goodness ; and the cool derision it expresses at the defeat of a benevolent scheme, of which malice, rather than penetration, had foreseen the failure. Alas ! there is little need of any such discouragements. The world is a climate which too naturally chills a glowing generosity, and contracts an expanded heart. The zeal of the most sanguine is but too apt to cool, and the activity of the most diligent, to slacken of itself : and

the disappointments which Benevolence encounters in the failure of her best concerted projects, and the frequent depravity of the most chosen objects of her bounty, would soon dry up the amplest streams of charity, were they not fed by the living fountain of religious principle.

I cannot dismiss this part of my subject without animadverting on the too prompt alacrity, even of worthy people, to disseminate, in public and general conversation, instances of their unsuccessful attempts
to

to do good. I never hear a charity story begun to be related in mixed company, that I do not tremble for the catastrophe, lest it should exhibit some mortifying disappointment, which may deter the inexperienced from running any generous hazards, and excite harsh suspicions, at an age, when it is less dishonourable to meet with a few casual hurts, and transient injuries, than to go cased in the cumbersome and impenetrable armour of distrust. The liberal should be particularly cautious how they furnish the avaricious with creditable pretences for saying their

F 3 money,

money, as all the instances of the mortifications of the humane are added to the armory of the covetous man's arguments, and produced, as defensive weapons, upon every fresh attack on his heart or his purse.

But I am willing to hope that that uncharitableness which we so often meet with in persons of advanced years, is not always the effect of a heart naturally hard. Misanthropy is very often nothing but abused sensibility. Long habits of the world, and a melancholy conviction how little good he has been able to do

do in it, hardens many a tender hearted person. The milk of human kindness becomes soured by repeated acts of ingratitude. This commonly induces an indifference to the well-being of others, and a hopelessness of adding to the stock of human virtue and human happiness. This uncomfortable disease is very fond of spreading its own contagion, which is a cruelty to the health of young and uninfected virtue.—For this distemper, generated by a too sanguine disposition, and grown chronical from repeated disappointments, there is but one

F 4 remedy,

remedy, or rather one prevention : and this is a genuine principle of piety. He who is once convinced that he is to assist his fellow creatures, because it is the will of God, and one of the conditions of obtaining his favour, will soon get above all uneasiness when the consequence does not answer his expectation. He will soon become only anxious to do his duty, humbly committing events to higher hands. Disappointments will then only serve to refine his motives, and purify his virtue. His charity will then become a sacrifice less unworthy of the

the altar on which it is offered. His affections will be more spiritualized, and his devotions more intense. Nothing short of such a courageous piety can preserve a heart hackneyed in the world from relaxed diligence, or criminal despair.

People in general are not aware of the mischief of judging of the rightness of any action by its prosperity, or of the excellence of any institution by the abuse of it. We must never proportion our exertions to our success, but to our duty. If every laudable undertaking were to be

2

dropped

dropped because it failed in some cases, or was abused in others, there would not be left an Alms-House, a Charity-School, or an Hospital in the land. And if every right practice were to be discontinued because it had been found not to be successful in every instance, this false reasoning pushed to the extreme, might at last be brought as an argument for shutting up our churches, and burning our bibles.

But if, on the one hand, there is a proud and arrogant discretion which ridicules, as Utopian and romantic,
every

every generous project of the active and the liberal ; so there is on the other, a sort of popular bounty which arrogates to itself the exclusive name of *feeling*, and rejects with disdain the influence of an higher principle. I am far from intending to depreciate this humane and exquisitely tender sentiment, which the beneficent Author of our nature gave us, as a stimulus to remove the distresses of others, in order to get rid of our own uneasiness. I would only observe, that where not strengthened by superior motives, it is a casual and precarious instrument

instrument of good, and ceases to operate, except in the immediate presence, and within the audible cry of misery. This sort of feeling forgets that any calamity exists which is out of its own sight; and though it would empty its purse for such an occasional object as rouses transient sensibility, yet it seldom makes any stated provision for miseries, which are not the less real because they do not obtrude upon the sight, and awaken the tenderness of immediate sympathy. This is a mechanical charity, which requires springs and wheels to set it a going; whereas,
real

real Christian charity does not wait to be acted upon by impressions and impulses.

Another cause which very much intimidates well-disposed people, is their terror, lest the character of piety should derogate from their reputation as men of sense. Every man of the world naturally arrogates to himself the superiority of understanding over every religious man. He, therefore, who has been accustomed to set a high value on his intellectual powers, must have made very considerable advances in piety before he
can

can acquire a magnanimous indifference to this usurped superiority; before he can submit to the parsimonious allotment of wit and learning, which is assigned him by the supercilious hand of worldly wisdom. But this attack upon his pride will be the best touchstone of his sincerity. If his advances have not been so considerable, then, by an hypocrisy of the least common kind, he will be industrious to appear less good than he really is, lest the detection of his serious propensities should draw on him the imputation of ordinary parts or low attainments. But the dan-

ger is, that while he is too sedulously intent on maintaining his pretensions as an ingenious man, his claims to piety should daily become weaker. That which is long suppressed is too frequently extinguished. For this reason, principally, it is to be regretted that religious conversation should be so carefully banished from polite company. Were it otherwise, young and bashful piety, instead of being afraid to shew its head, would be cultivated, cherished, and encouraged. For while we are beings compounded of passion as well as intellect, the devotion of the
generality

So

Thoughts on the

generality is not so purely spiritual as not to stand in need of every external and collateral help. Fire is too apt to be extinguished without the aid of such material fuel as is possessed of igneous particles.

Nothing perhaps more plainly discovers the faint impression which religion has really made upon our hearts, than this disinclination even of good people to serious conversation. Let me not be misunderstood; I do not mean the wrangle of debate; I do not mean the gall of controversy; I do not mean the fiery
strife,

strife of *opinions*, than which nothing can be less favourable to good nature, good manners, or good society. But it were to be wished, that it was not thought ill-bred and indiscreet that the escapes of the tongue should now and then betray the “fullness of the heart:” that when such subjects are casually introduced, a discouraging coldness did not instantly take place of that sprightly animation of countenance which made common topics interesting. If these “outward and visible signs” were unequivocal, we should form but moderate ideas of the in-

G

ward

ward and spiritual grace. It were to be wished, that such subjects were not thought dull *merely* because they are good ; that they had the common chance of fair discussion ; and that parts and learning were not ashamed to exert themselves on occasions where both might appear to so much advantage. If the heart were really interested, could the affections forbear now and then to break out into language ? Artists, physicians, merchants, lawyers, and scholars keep up the spirit of their professions, by mutual intercourse. New lights are struck out, improvements are suggested,

suggested, emulation is kindled, love of the object is inflamed, mistakes are rectified, and desire of excellence is excited by communication. And is piety alone so very easy of acquisition, so very natural to our corrupt hearts, or so certainly progressive of itself, as to require none of the helps which are indispensable on all other subjects ? Travellers, who are to visit any particular country, are full of earnest inquiry, and diligent research ; they think nothing indifferent by which their future pleasure or advantage may be affected. Every hint which

may procure them any information, or caution them against any danger, is thankfully received ; and all this, because they are really in *earnest* in their preparation for this journey ; and do fully *believe*, not only that there is such a country, but that they have a personal interest in the good, or evil, which may be found in it.

A farther danger to good kind of people seems to arise from a mistaken idea, that only great and actual sins are to be guarded against. Whereas, sins of omission make up, perhaps,

perhaps, the most formidable part of *their* catalogue of offences. These generally supply in number what they want in weight, and are the more dangerous for being little ostensible. They continue to be repeated with less regret, because the remembrance of their predecessors does not, like the remembrance of formal, actual crimes, assume a body and a shape, and terrify by the impression of particular scenes and circumstances. While the memory of transacted evil haunts a tender conscience by perpetual apparition ; omitted duty, having no

local or personal existence, not being recorded by standing acts and deeds, and having no distinct image to which the mind may recur, sinks into quiet oblivion, without deeply wounding the conscience, or tormenting the imagination. These omissions were, perhaps, among the "secret sins," from which the royal penitent so earnestly desired to be cleansed: and it is worthy of the most serious consideration, that these are the offences against which the Gospel pronounces very alarming denunciations. It is not less against negative than actual evil, that affectionate

tionate exhortation, lively remonstrance, and pointed parable, are exhausted. It is against the tree which bore no fruit, the lamp which had no oil, the unprofitable servant who made no use of his talent, that the severe sentence is denounced ; as well as against *corrupt* fruit, *bad* oil, and talents *ill* employed. We are led to believe, from the same high authority, that omitted duties, and neglected opportunities, will furnish no inconsiderable portion of our future condemnation. A very awful part of the decision, in the great day of account, seems to be

reserved merely for omissions and negatives. Ye gave me NO meat; ye gave me NO drink; ye took me NOT in; ye visited me NOT. On the punishment attending positive crimes, as being more naturally obvious, more logically consequent, it was not, perhaps, thought so necessary to insist.

Another cause which still further impedes the reception of religion even among the well-disposed, is, that garment of sadness in which people delight to suppose her dressed; and that life of hard austerity, and
pining

pinning abstinence, which they pretend she enjoins her disciples. And it were well if this were only the misrepresentation of her declared enemies ; but, unhappily, it is the too frequent misconception of her injudicious friends. But such an overcharged picture is not more unamiable than it is unlike : for I will venture to affirm, that Religion, with all her beautiful and becoming sanctity, imposes fewer sacrifices, not only of rational, but of pleasurable enjoyment, than the uncontrolled dominion of any one vice. Her service is not only perfect safety,
but

but perfect freedom. She is not so tyrannizing as Passion, so exacting as the World, nor so despotic as Fashion. Let us try the case by a parallel, and examine it, not as affecting our virtue, but our pleasure. Does Religion forbid the cheerful enjoyments of life as rigorously as Avarice forbids them? Does she require such sacrifices of our ease as Ambition? or such renunciations of our quiet as Pride? Does Devotion *murder sleep* like Dissipation? Does she destroy Health like Intemperance? Does she annihilate Fortune like Gaming? Does she

the imbitter Life like Discord ; or abridge it like Duelling ? Does Religion impose more vigilance than Suspicion ? or half as many mortifications as Vanity ? Vice has her martyrs : and the most austere and self-denying Ascetic (who mistakes the genius of Christianity almost as much as her enemies) never tormented himself with such cruel and causeless severity as that with which Envy lacerates her unhappy votaries. Worldly honour obliges us to be at the trouble of resenting injuries ; but Religion spares us that inconvenience by commanding us to forgive them ;
and

and by this injunction consults our happiness no less than our virtue ; for the torment of constantly hating any one must be, at least, equal to the sin of it.—If this estimate be fairly made, then is the balance clearly on the side of Religion even in the article of pleasure.

It is an infirmity not uncommon to good kind of people, to comfort themselves that they live in the exercise of some one natural good quality, and to make a religious merit of a constitutional happiness. They have also a strong propensity to separate
what

what God has joined ; belief and practice ; the creed and the commandments ; actions and motives ; moral duty and religious obedience. Whereas, you will hardly find, in all the New Testament, a moral, or a social virtue that is not hedged in by some religious injunction : scarcely a good action enjoined towards others, but it is connected to some exhortation to personal purity. All the charities of benevolence are, in general, so agreeable to the natural make of the heart, that it is a very tender mercy of God to have made that a duty, which, to finer spirits, would

would have been irresistible as an inclination ; and to annex the highest future reward to the greatest present pleasure. But in order to give a religious sanction to a social virtue, the duty of visiting the fatherless and widow in their affliction, is inseparably attached to the difficult and self-denying injunction of keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. This adjunct is the more needful, as many are apt to make a kind of moral commutation, and to allow themselves so much pleasure in exchange for so much charity. But one good quality can never stand proxy for another. The Christian

tian virtues derive their highest lustre from association : they have such a spirit of society, that they are weak and imperfect when solitary ; their radiance is brightened by communication, and their natural strength multiplied by their alliance with each other.

It cannot be denied that good sort of people sometimes use religion as the voluptuous use physic. As the latter employ medicine to make health agree with luxury, the former consider religion as a medium to reconcile peace of conscience with a

life of pleasure. But no moral chemistry can blend natural contradictions ; the world will still be uppermost, and religion will disdain to coalesce with its antipathy.

Let me not be suspected of intending to insinuate that religion encourages men to fly from society, and hide themselves in solitudes : to renounce the generous and important duties of active life, for the visionary, cold, and fruitless virtues of an Hermitage, or a Cloyster. No : the mischief arises not from our living in the world, but from the
world

world living in us ; occupying our hearts, and monopolizing our affections. Action is the life of virtue, and the world is the noblest theatre of action. Perhaps some of the most perfect patterns of human conduct may be found in the most public stations, and among the busiest orders of mankind. It is, indeed, a scene of trial, but the glory of the triumph is proportioned to the peril of the conflict. A sense of danger quickens circumspection, and makes virtue more vigilant. Lot maintained his integrity in a great city, pro-

H

ver-

verbially wicked, and forfeited it in the bosom of retirement.

It has been said that worldly good sort of people are a greater credit to their profession, by exhibiting more cheerfulness, gaiety and happiness, than are visible in serious Christians. If this assertion be true, which I very much suspect, is it not probable that the apparent ease and gaiety of the former may be derived from the same source of consolation which Mrs. Quickly recommends to Falstaff, in Shakespeare's admirable picture of the death-bed scene
of

of that witty profligate? “ He
“ wished for comfort, quoth mine
“ hostess, and began to talk of God;
“ now I, to comfort him, begged
“ him he should not think of God:
“ it was time enough to trouble
“ himself with these things.” Do
not many deceive themselves by
drawing water from these dry wells
of comfort? and patch up a pre-
carious and imperfect happiness in
this world, by diverting their atten-
tion from the concerns of the next?

Another obstruction to the growth
of piety, is that unhappy prejudice

H 2

which

which even good kind of people too often entertain against those who differ from them in opinion. Every man who is sincerely in earnest to advance the interests of religion, will have acquired such a degree of candour, as to become indifferent by whom good is done, or who has the reputation of doing it, provided it be actually done. He will be anxious to increase the stock of human virtue, and of human happiness, by every possible means. He will whet and sharpen every instrument of goodness, though it be not cast in his own mould, or fashioned
after

after his own pattern. He will never consider whether the form suits his own particular taste, but whether the instrument itself be calculated to accomplish the work of his master. It is a test by which he will be able to judge of his own sincerity, if the delight he feels at hearing of a meritorious action suffers no abatement, because it was performed by one who differs from him in his religious, or even his political sentiments.

I shall conclude these loose and immethodical hints with a general

H 3

address

address to those who content themselves with a decent profession of the doctrines, instead of a diligent discharge of the duties of Christianity. Believe, and forgive me :—you are the people who lower religion in the eyes of its enemies. The openly prophane,* the avowed enemies to God and goodness, confirm the truths they mean to oppose, illustrate the doctrines they deny, and

* In the last days shall come scoffers walking after their own lusts, &c. &c. 2 Peter, chap. iii. ver. 3. with a multitude of other texts to the same purpose.

accomplish

accomplish the predictions they disbelieve. But you, like an inadequate and faithless prop, overturn the edifice which you pretend to support.—When an acute and keen-eyed infidel measures your lives with the rule by which you profess to walk ; he finds so little analogy between them, the copy is so unlike the pattern, that this inconsistency of yours is the pass through which his most dangerous attack is made. And I must confess, that of all the arguments, which the malignant industry of infidelity has been able to muster, the conduct of professing

Christians seems to me to be the only one which is really capable of staggering a man of sense.—He hears of a spiritual and self-denying religion ; he reads the beatitudes ; he observes that the grand artillery of the Gospel is planted against pride. He then turns to the transcript of this perfect original ; the lives which pretend to be fashioned by it. There he sees, with triumphant derision, that pride, self-love, self-sufficiency, unbounded personal expence, and an inordinate appetite for pleasure, are reputable vices in the eyes of many of those who acknowledge

knowledge the truth of the Christian doctrines. He weighs that meekness to which a blessing is promised, with that arrogance which is too common to be very dishonourable. He compares that non-conformity to the world, which the Bible makes the criterion of a believer, with that rage for amusement which is not considered as disreputable in a Christian. He opposes the self-denying and lowly character of the Author of our faith with the sensual practices of his followers. He finds little resemblance between the restraints prescribed, and the gratifications

tions indulged in. What conclusions must a speculative reasoning sceptic draw from such premises? Is it any wonder that such phrases as a broken spirit, a contrite heart, poverty of spirit, refraining the soul, keeping it low, and casting down high imaginations, should be to the unbeliever "foolishness," when such humiliating doctrines are a "stumbling block" to professing Christians, who cannot always cordially relish a religion which professedly tells them it was sent to stain the pride of human glory, and to exclude boasting?

But

But though the passive and self-denying virtues are not high in the esteem of mere good sort of people, yet they are peculiarly the evangelical virtues. The world extols brilliant actions; the Gospel enjoins good habits and right motives: it seldom inculcates those splendid deeds which make heroes, or those founding sentences which constitute philosophers; but it enjoins the harder task of renouncing self, of living uncorrupted in the world, of subduing besetting sins, and of not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought. The acquisition of
glory

glory was the precept of other religions, the contempt of it is the perfection of Christianity.

Let us then be consistent, and we shall never be contemptible, even in the eyes of our enemies, Let not the unbeliever say that we have one set of opinions for our theory, and another for our practice; that to the vulgar

We shew the rough and thorny way to
heav'n,

While we the primrose path of dalliance
tread.

It would become our characters
as men of sense, of which consist-

ency is a most unequivocal proof, to choose some rule and abide by it. An extempore Christian is a ridiculous character. Fixed principles will be followed by a consistent course of action ; while indecision of spirit will produce instability of conduct. If there be a model which we profess to admire, let us square our lives by it. If the Koran of Mahomet, or the Revelations of Zoroaster, be a perfect guide, let us follow one of them. If either Epicurus, Zeno, or Confucius, be the peculiar object of our veneration and respect, let us fashion our conduct

duct by the dictates of their philosophy; and then, though we may be wrong, we shall not be absurd. But if the Bible be in truth the word of God, as we profess to believe, we need look no farther for a consummate pattern. Let us then make it the rule of our practice here, if it is indeed to be the rule of our judgment hereafter.

But I am willing to flatter myself that the moral and intellectual scene about us begins to brighten. I indulge myself in moments of the most enthusiastic and delightful vision;

lion; taking encouragement from that glorious prophecy, that “of the
“increase of his government there
“shall be no end.” A prediction which seems to be gradually accomplishing: and in no instance more, perhaps, than in the noble attempt about to be made for the abolition of the African slave-trade. For what event can human wisdom foresee more likely to contribute to
“give the Son the Heathen for his
“inheritance, and the uttermost
“parts of the earth for his possession,” than the success of such an enterprize, which will restore the
lustre

lustre of the Christian name, too long sullied with oppression, cruelty, and injustice?

A good spirit seems to be at work. A catholic temper is diffusing itself among all sects and parties: an enlightened candour, and a liberal toleration were never more prevalent; good men combat each other's opinions with less rancour, and better manners. We have many public encouragements; we have a pious king; a wise and virtuous minister; many respectable, and not a few serious, clergy. (May their number
daily

daily increase !) Among these some of the first in dignity are the first in conduct. An increasing desire to instruct the poor, to inform the ignorant, and to reclaim the vicious, is spreading among us. The late Royal Proclamation affords an honourable sanction to virtuous endeavours, and lends nerves and sinews to the otherwise feeble exertions of individuals, by enforcing laws wisely planned, but hitherto feebly executed. In short, there is a good hope that we shall more and more become that happy people who have the Lord for their God : that as

I prosperity

prosperity is already within our walls, peace and virtue may abide in our dwellings.

But vain will be all endeavours after *partial* and *subordinate* amendment. Reformation must begin with the GREAT, or it will never be effectual. *Their* example is the fountain from whence the vulgar draw their habits, actions, and characters. To expect to reform the poor while the opulent are corrupt, is to throw odours into the stream while the springs are poisoned. Even the excellent institution of
Sunday

Sunday schools for training religious servants, will avail but little, if, as soon as the persons there educated, come into the families of the great, they behold practices diametrically opposite to the instructions they have been imbibing. If they fall into the houses of the profligate, they will hear the doctrines which they have been taught to reverence, derided ; if into mere worldly families, they will see them neglected : and to the essential principle of vital Christianity, oblivion is scarcely less fatal than contempt.

If, therefore, the rich and great will not, from a liberal spirit of doing right, abstain from those offences, for which the poor are to suffer fines and imprisonments, effectual good cannot be done. It will signify little, to lay penalties on the horses of the drover, or on the wagon of the husbandman, while the chariot wheels of the great roll with incessant motion: and the sacred day on which the sons of industry are commanded by royal proclamation to desist from travelling, is for that very reason selected for the journeys of the great, and preferred, because
the

the road is encumbered with fewer interruptions. But will it not strike every well-meaning Sunday traveller with a generous remorse, when he reflects that he owes the accommodation of an unobstructed road to the very obedience which is paid by others to that divine and human law which he is in the very act of violating ?

Will not the common people think it a little inequitable that they are abridged of the diversions of the public-house and the gaming yard on Sunday evening, when they shall hear

that many houses of the first nobility are on that evening crowded with company, and such amusements carried on as are prohibited by human laws even on common days? As imitation, and a desire of being in the fashion, govern the lower orders of mankind, it is to be feared that they will not think reformation reputable, while they see it recommended only, and not practised, by their betters. A precept counteracted by an example, is worse than fruitless, it is ridiculous: and the common people will be tempted to set an inferior value on goodness, when

when they find it is only expected from the lower ranks. They cannot surely but smile at the disinterestedness of their superiors, who, while they seem anxiously concerned to save others, are so little solicitous about their own state. The ambitious vulgar will hardly relish a salvation which is only intended for Plebeians ; nor will they be apt to entertain very exalted notions of that promised future reward, the road to which they perceive their betters are so much more earnest to point out to *them*, than to walk in themselves.

It was not by inflicting pains and penalties that Christianity first made its way into the world: the divine truths it inculcated received irresistible confirmation from the LIVES, PRACTICES, and EXAMPLES, of its venerable professors. These were arguments which no popular prejudice could resist, no Jewish logic refute, and no Pagan persecution discredit. Had the primitive Christians only *praised* and *promulgated* the most perfect religion the world ever saw, it could have produced but very slender effects on the faith and manners of the people, if the
jealous

jealous and inquisitive eye of malice could have detected that the Doctrines they recommended had not been illustrated by the Lives they led.

POST-

P O S T S C R I P T.

THE public favour having already brought this little E ssay to a second edition, the author has been sedulous to discover any particular objections that have been made to it. Since the preceding sheets were printed off, it has been suggested by some very respectable persons who have honoured this slight performance with their notice, that it inculcates a too rigid austerity, and carries the point of observing Sunday much too far ; that it takes away
all

all the usual occupations of the day, without substituting any others in their stead ; and that it only pulls down a wrong system, without so much as attempting to build up a right one. The author begs leave to observe in his own defence, that, in animadverting on error, he purposely avoided insisting on obvious duty. To tell people what they already know to be right was less the intention of this address, than to observe upon practices which long habit had prevented them from perceiving to be wrong. Sensible and well-meaning persons can hardly be
at

at a loss on a subject which has exhausted precept and wearied exhortation. To have expatiated on it, would only have been to repeat what is already known and acknowledged to be right, even by those whom the hurry of engagements will not allow to take breath one day in a week, that they may run the race of pleasure with more alacrity on the other six. But, probably, it is not the duties, but the amusements appropriated to the day, about which the inquiry is made. It will, perhaps, be found that the intervals of a Sunday regularly devoted to all its reasonable
and

and obvious duties, are not likely to be so very tedious, but that they might be easily and pleasantly filled up by cheerful, innocent, and instructive conversation. Human delights would be very circumscribed indeed, if the practices here noticed as erroneous, included the whole circle of enjoyment. Are the pleasures of retirement, the pleasures of friendship, the pleasures of intellect, and the pleasures of beneficence, to be estimated as nothing?

There will not be found, perhaps,
a single person who shall honour
2 these

these pages with a perusal, who has not been repeatedly told, with an air of imposing gravity, by those who produce cards on a Sunday evening, *that it is better to play than to talk scandal*. Before this pithy axiom was invented, it was not perhaps suspected that Sunday gaming would ever be adduced as an argument in favour of morals. Without entering into the comparative excellence of these two occupations, or presuming to determine which has a claim to pre-eminence of piety, one may venture to be thankful that these alternatives do not seem to
empty

empty the whole stock of human resource.

People in the gay and elegant scenes of life, are perpetually complaining that an extensive acquaintance, and the necessity of being constantly engaged in large circles and mixed assemblies, leave them little leisure for family enjoyment, select conversation, and domestic delights. Others, with no less earnestness, lament that the hurry of public stations, and the necessary demands of active life, allow them no time for any but frivolous reading. Now the re-

currence of one Sunday in every week, seems to hold out an inviting remedy for both these evils. The sweet and delightful pleasures of family society might then be uninterruptedly enjoyed, by the habitual exclusion of trifling and idle visitors, who do not come to see their friends, but to get rid of themselves. Persons of fashion, living in the same house, and connected by the closest ties, whom business and pleasure keep asunder during the greatest part of the week, would then have an opportunity of spending a little time together, and of cultivating that friendship for each

each other, and that affection for their children, to which the present manners are not *very* favourable.

As to the other set of complainers, those who can find no time to read; this interval naturally presents itself; and it luckily happens, that some of the most enlightened men the world ever saw have, not unfrequently, devoted their rare talents to subjects peculiarly suited to this day; and that not merely in the didactic form of sermons, which men of the world affect to disdain; but in every alluring shape which human ingenuity could assume. It

K

luckily

luckily happens, among a thousand other instances, that the deepest metaphysician,* the greatest astronomer, the sublimest poet, the acutest reasoner, the politest writer, the most consummate philosopher, and the profoundest investigator of nature, which this, or perhaps any country has produced, have all written on such subjects as are analogous to the business of this day. Such authors as these, even wits, philosophers, and men of the world,

* Locke, Newton, Milton, Butler, Addison, Bacon, Boyle.

must acknowledge that it is not bigotry to read, nor enthusiasm to commend. Of this illustrious groupe only *one* was a clergyman, which to some readers will be a strong recommendation : though it is a little hard that the fastidiousness of modern taste should undervalue the learned and pious labours of divines, only because they are *professional*. In every other function, a man's compositions are not the less esteemed because they peculiarly belong to his more immediate business. Blackstone's opinions in jurisprudence are of unquestionable validity,

K 2

dity, though he was a lawyer; Sydenham is still consulted as oracular in fevers, in spite of his having been a physician; and the commentaries of Cæsar are of established authority in military operations, notwithstanding he was a soldier.

F I N I S.